

## HURRICANE SEASON PREPAREDNESS

Hurricane season is almost upon us. I know that evacuation was difficult this past year, to say the least. Please keep in mind that evacuation is still the best option, and the need to be proactive is a must. Hurricane Rita was a near miss last year, and there is no guarantee that this year the Houston–Galveston area will be safe. Please keep in mind those that rode out the storm in New Orleans thinking that Hurricane Katrina would not hit there because storms have changed course at the last minute in the past. In order to adequately prepare, here are some tips for your home, family, and what you can expect from your loved ones working for MSST Galveston.

- ❑ Ensure you have all important paperwork in one place and that it is easily accessible and will take minimal time to get together.
- ❑ Ensure a full power of attorney is completed and update wills.
- ❑ Check your insurance policies to make sure you understand your deductibles and what is covered.
- ❑ Research evacuation sites and housing for pets in the areas North, East, and West of Houston/Galveston. Make sure you have several options in each area. There is more information on evacuation sites below.
- ❑ Ensure your family disaster plan is up to date, and go over it with each other and your children. Good plans can be found on these websites: <http://www.houstontx.gov/oem/>, <http://www.texas-city-tx.org/DisasterPreparednessGuide.htm>, and <http://www.gcoem.org/default.php>.

Some members of MSST Galveston will be able to be with their families during an evacuation and through the storm. Many members will evacuate with the team and prepare to respond to the disaster immediately after the storm has passed. Remember to plan for the worst, and that having your loved ones with you during this difficult time is not always guaranteed. There is no list of who goes and who stays. This is determined based on the needs of the Coast Guard and mission requirements and is often determined at the last minute. Please be flexible with your plans. More information:

- ❑ **Primary Evacuation Site:** Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX, has been designated as the primary storm evacuation site for all Coast Guard personnel and their families residing in the Houston – Galveston area. **You DO NOT have to evacuate to that location.** However, **you will only be reimbursed for travel equivalent to it.** For example, if you evacuate to St. Louis, the Coast Guard will pay only your mileage to San Antonio. They accept pets as long as all shots are up to date and they are kept in crates/kennels. USCG Representative (210) 671-9011/12/13, Information Line (210) 671-6397.
- ❑ **Establish and Practice a Family Disaster Plan.** Discuss the types of hazards that could affect your home. Know your home's vulnerability to storm surge and winds. Ensure that your Insurance coverage is up to date and adequate. Post emergency numbers by the telephone and teach children how to use them. Take first aid and CPR classes. Plan for people with special needs and pets. Choose someone who will know your whereabouts in the event of an evacuation; make sure your family, close friends, and coworkers know who they can call to see how you are in the event of an emergency.
- ❑ **Stock a Disaster Supply Kit** with enough materials to last a period of three to seven days. Purchase the items you'll need now. Some people store their supplies in a cooler, which can be used to keep ice and refrigerated items in an emergency. Check your supply of medications and make sure you include enough to last up to a week. Make sure copies of your important papers are in your kit. This includes insurance information, telephone numbers.
- ❑ **Develop an Evacuation Plan.** Choose a destination and map a route. In the event of an evacuation, where will you go? Don't wait until the last minute to do this.
- ❑ **Develop a Communications Plan.** Determine an out-of-town friend to be the "family contact." Contact this person to let them know where you will go in the event of an evacuation. Tell your

contact's telephone number to your family, friends, and coworkers so they can check on your status in the event of an evacuation.

- ❑ **Your Disaster Supply Kit** should include enough supplies to last for a period of three to seven days. Allow one gallon of water per person per day. Include water for pets. Some items to include are suggested below:

- Non-perishable packaged or canned food/juices
- Food for the elderly and pets
- Non-electric can opener
- Cooking tools/ fuel
- Paper Plates/Plastic Utensils
- Clothing
- Seasonal/Rain gear/sturdy shoes
- Blankets/Pillows
- First Aid Kit
- Medications/Prescriptions
- Special Items for babies and the elderly
- Diapers/Moisture Wipes/Bottles
- Spare eyeglasses
- Toiletries
- Hygiene Items
- Battery powered radio
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cash (some banks and ATMs may not be available), Credit card machines require electricity
- Important Documents
- Toys/Books/Games
- Pet care items (proper identification, records/medications, carrier or cage, muzzle and leash, ample supply of food and water)
- Plastic gas cans (the earlier cans are purchased, the better)
- Copies of important papers/files

More information will be provided to you the closer we get to hurricane season. A detailed unit evacuation plan, as well as additional checklists for preparing homes and disaster kits will be sent out to every home. If you know of any other helpful hints, websites, evacuation areas, or resources, please email me at [Loraleigh.A.Whiteside@uscg.mil](mailto:Loraleigh.A.Whiteside@uscg.mil).